



# Yellowstone River *Conservation District* Council

## Meeting Minutes – December 4, 2008 MSU Billings

Members Present: Walter Rolf, Custer – Park – Dave Schwarz, Prairie – Don Youngbauer, Rosebud/MACD – Steve Story, Stillwater, Paul Gilbert, Sweet Grass – Phil Fox, Treasure – Bob Hector, Yellowstone – Orvin Finsaas, McKenzie County, North Dakota – John Moorhouse, RAC Chair.

Others Present: Warren Kellogg, TAC; Laurie Zeller, DNRC; Mike Penfold, Yellowstone River Forum; Jeff Tiberi, MACD; Joe Fidel, USDA-NRCS; Mack Cole, RAC; Tiffany Vanosdall, USACE; Greg Johnson, USACE; Melissa Passes, BLM-Billings Field Office; Gayle Sitter, BLM, John Pulasky, Our Montana; Nicole McClain, YRCDC Coordinator; Kelly Norwood, Project Assistant and Carol Watts, Custer CD.

Chairman Don Youngbauer called the meeting to order at 10:00 am on December 4, 2008. Introductions were made. Each Council member reported on activities in their districts.

TAC update: Warren Kellogg gave a brief account of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting that met October 29 and 30. Progress is being made on the economic scope of work and Warren asked Burt Williams to summarize the progress to-date. Burt said the TAC is trying to find a way to write the scope of work so that at the end of the study it can be used as a practical tool. They currently have asked Headwaters Economics in Bozeman to submit a proposal for a pilot project based on housing development. Their first proposal posed several questions that they have since responded to and recently resubmitted a revised proposal. If the ACOE can find a way to contract this pilot project, a full proposal will be made to the Council for their consideration at a future meeting.

Warren said that the Channel Migration Zone mapping (CMZ) expanding into Park County has been approved and the contract has been signed. The CMZ workshops will be scheduled sometime between January and March 2009 in order to have time to finalize the county CMZ maps with the new LiDAR topographic data.

The avian study is completed and the revised version will go to the TAC for a final review. The product will be available in the next month or two. Danielle Jones, Principal Investigator from MSU-Bozeman will be asked to make a presentation to the Council in the near future.

Warren stated there was a teleconference with the Bureau of Reclamation study team regarding the BOR's side channel study on the Big Horn River below the Yellowtail Dam. It was agreed to coordinate the work they are doing with the work being done on the Yellowstone River main stem. Greg Johnson stressed that it was important for the two studies to be compatible. The funding may not be available for the BOR to expand their studies to match the YRCDC's.

Greg Johnson introduced Tiffany Vanosdall as the new Project Manager for the Omaha District; she is currently helping Greg with the EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) for the Intake Fish Passage project.

Greg stated that FFY 2009 funding for the Corps was unclear at this time. He was confident that they would receive at least \$200,000, and hopeful that they would receive more.

Greg said the scoping meetings on Intake were successful. They were able to do a site visit at Glendive. A number of comments were received and the comment period was extended.

Warren reported that the 310 Google Earth database is continuing to be developed, and the training sessions for District Administrators in the Yellowstone River Basin will be held this winter. It was suggested that the Corps; Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and floodplain administrators also be invited.

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Warren announced that there would be a TAC meeting upstairs in room 306 at 1:00pm today. Anyone wanting to attend is welcome.

Warren suggested that letters including brochures again be sent out to state and federal land management agencies concerning Russian olive and Salt cedar management. There may be an opportunity to work with NRCS on their Yellowstone River Russian olive Initiative.

Presentation: Joe Fidel, NRCS Bozeman, gave a presentation on Russian olive and salt cedar management. Joe gave a brief history of his past experiences. He is working for USDA-NRCS out of the Bozeman office. Joe is promoting a Special Initiative that would fund removal of the invasive trees on riparian areas along the Yellowstone River. He may have 1 million dollars in his budget and needs producers to sign up at their local NRCS office. It is necessary for the field offices to be involved in managing the contracts although some offices do not support this Initiative. He outlined the procedure to follow including ranking criteria and said he hoped that Russian olives could be eliminated along the river in the next 4-5 years. Recovery is also part of the program and native trees and shrubs would be planted where needed.

Don Youngbauer commented that this was a tremendous opportunity for demonstration plots and he urged the individual districts to take action.

Warren asked what role the YRCDC could play in developing a long term strategy to make use of non-federal funds that could leverage NRCS funding. It was suggested that a committee be formed to explore ideas. John Moorhouse, Mack Cole, Warren Kellogg will serve on the committee and Scott Bockness of the Yellowstone County Weed Control will be asked to join.

MRRIC Update: Dave Schwarz attended a Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee meeting in St. Louis Missouri in September. Approximately sixty four delegates attended and progress was made on determining operating rules. The next meeting in December should finalize the operating rules. Dave said he was given a large amount of material to read concerning pallid sturgeons.

RAC Update: John Moorhouse said the draft brochure on salt cedar handed out at the last meeting has been updated but the revision is not available at this time. Comments can still be given to John himself or Kelly Norwood.

The next item was the standing rules, copies of the changes were in the Council member's packets. The existing standing rules were presented with the changes highlighted. The RAC has a travel budget, and travel needs to be approved. The revision allows for RAC members to be paid a fifty dollar stipend for attending RAC meetings. There is also the potential for a RAC member to be paid a stipend to attend a Council meeting if their presence is required. Bob Hector made a motion to approve changes to the standing rules, Dave Schwarz seconded, there was no discussion and the motion carried by voice vote. Paul Gilbert suggested a clarification regarding the rules concerning Council members attending TAC meetings. Nicole will bring language to the next meeting.

Mack Cole asked if the Council was interested in promoting conservation practices on irrigation canals. Paul Gilbert noted that this is also needed for smaller ditches. There is existing guidance available and the RAC could write a BMP and present it at a future Council meeting.

Dave Schwarz commented that part of the problem was the change in cost share on USDA-NRCS cost share. Most producers can participate at 75% cost share but not at 50%. Nicole suggested a tour of the Buffalo Rapids project. Laurie Zeller suggested involving Jane Holzer of the Montana Salinity Control Association.

Coordinator's report: This report was sent out and there is a correction on Coordinator's report number 3 to read 11/18 instead of 11/21.

There were no comments back on the annual report. Nicole will send the report out again.

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Nicole thanked the Council for the privilege of attending the Montana Association Conservation District's (MACD) convention in November. She was able to experience a resolution making its way through the procedure. Rosebud County submitted a resolution on the Cooperative Watershed Management Act - Senate Bill 3085, which went through the water resources subcommittee and then onto voting membership where it passed. Nicole said this is a great way to get support for issues concerning the river study. Part of the resolution came directly out of our position paper on the CWMA. It is important now to work with MACD to get language inserted into the bill. Discussion followed and it was decided to talk to the legislative people in Billings and draft a letter to MACD.

The Council has been asked to make a contribution to the legislative dinner on January 30, 2009 in Helena. Nicole will take the YR CDC display to be showcased at the dinner. Steve Story made a motion to donate up to \$250.00 to the dinner, Walter Rolf seconded and the motion carried by voice vote. At least one Council member should be in attendance. Paul Gilbert said he could tentatively agree to be there.

The WRDA roundtable discussion will be held tomorrow beginning at 8:00am in this meeting room. 3110 authorizes 30 million dollars to be used for projects on the Yellowstone River. Local conservation districts may be called on to provide insight concerning the ranking of proposed projects. Roles and responsibilities will be discussed as well as implementation planning.

Business Meeting: Carol Watts handed out the financial reports. The first report shows the activity in the account since the last meeting. The grant statement shows the expenses against the grants and the current balances. There were no questions. Paul Gilbert made a motion to accept the financial reports, Orvin Finsaas seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

The October 23, 2008 minutes were approved as written. Paul Gilbert made the motion to accept the minutes, Phil Fox seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

Partner Update: Laurie Zeller, DNRC reported that there would not be any extra money available for funding the pass through grant. She requested a two year budget, and a plan written for each year.

Jeff Tiberi, MACD talked about the "meet and greet" with the legislators and suggested that brochures be available. He also reported that the convention in 2009 will be held in Lewistown, and the following year it will be in Billings. The spring board meeting will be held in Havre.

Vice-Chairman's Report: Bob Hector reviewed the past cleanup projects on the Yellowstone river. He then asked the Council members to take a survey that he had prepared on possible future projects home to their districts to be filled out. Surveys should be returned to him within a month.

Chairman's Report: Don Youngbauer said the follow up meeting with Montana Rail Link (MRL) in Missoula in October was successful. The TAC is working on preparing a draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and MRL. It will be presented at a future date for discussion and action. Don concurred with Nicole that the resolution process at the convention was impressive. It is a great way to get support for projects and ideas that need widespread recognition.

Discussion: The next meeting will be January 22, 2009. Agenda items are: Avian Report by Danielle Jones, Dornix Park Position Statement, Water Conservation and ditch lining – potential BMP for irrigation, wording on standing rules, MRL MOU, 2008 Annual Report, MACD Legislative Dinner/Meet & Greet, WRDA 2007 – Section 3110, Corridor Study Overview, CWMA.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

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The meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm. Note: there will be an evaluation done for Nicole McClain immediately following this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Watts, CCCD Administrator

## **Yellowstone River Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Notes – 12/04/2008 Billings, MT – MSU-Billings, Business College**

### **Cumulative Effects Analysis**

#### Cumulative Effects Analysis:

Burt Williams led our on-going discussion on cumulative effects (CE). We spent most of our time going over the CE component spreadsheets for “Water Quantity” and “Geological Context”. The focus of our discussion was on the two columns now labeled: Characteristics and Possible Human Impacts. Greg Johnson will work with Burt to reorganize the spreadsheets to reflect our discussion.

### **Hydrology, Hydraulics, and Geomorphology**

#### Hydrology/Hydraulics Up-Date

Greg Johnson provided a brief up-date on the ACOE’s progress with the ice modeling in Dawson County. The modeling calibration is taking a more time than originally thought. Greg will provide a more detailed up-date at the February TAC meeting.

#### Channel Migration Zone (CMZ) Mapping

It was reported that the contract (DTM #20) between YRCDC and DTM has been signed. The statement of work encompassed in this contract is to expand the CMZ reach-based mapping into Park County and to up-date existing CMZ maps using the new LiDAR elevation data. Completion date has been set for March 31, 2009.

#### Channel Migration Zone Workshops

County-based CMZ workshops for all 12 counties along the Yellowstone River basin will take place this winter. Work Order #7 (GIS Services contract) outlines the scope of work and budget. Nicole and Karin will be making meeting arrangements with the local CDs.

#### Geomorphology Scope of Work

Karin Boyd and Jim Robinson were asked to provide a summary of the progress made to-date on the various geomorphology efforts and to revisit the original scope to discuss undone tasks and needed revisions. This discussion will be on the TAC’s February agenda.

#### Historic Events Timeline

Karin Boyd briefly reviewed the draft Historic Events Timeline report (dated 11/17/2008). The TAC was asked to review the draft and provide any comments to Karin by the middle of December.

### **Biology**

#### Avian

We recently received a revised report dated 12/3/2008 that has been forwarded to all TAC members. Any additional comments on the report are due to either George or Warren by the middle of December. Warren will contact Danielle to see if she would give a presentation to the Council at their April meeting. George Jordan also spoke with Andy Hansen regarding questions that the TAC

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raised at their October meeting. Andy's response was handed out to the TAC in the form of an e-mail summary compiled by George.

## Fisheries

The Fisheries Habitat Mapping Pilot Study includes 1) complete the 2001 bank full mapping using the methodology outlined in the pilot study; 2) revise the low-flow map units to be coincident with the low-flow 2001 flowlines; 3) QA/QC all resulting data; and 4) compile the data and document the process. Estimated budget is \$10,321. Work Order #5 – revised has been approved with a completion deadline set for February 2008.

## Riparian

Warren Kellogg recommended that the Riparian Vegetation Mapping draft report (dated July 28, 2008) be finalized. This effort has spawned several ideas on how to possibly redirect the riparian scope of work to better correlate with the other studies (i.e. geomorphology, fisheries habitat). Warren will work with members of the TAC and DTM on fleshing out these ideas.

## **Socioeconomics**

### Economics

Burt and Warren met with Ray Rasker, Headwaters Economics, in November. Burt reviewed the questions raised during the October TAC meeting and Headwater Economics responses to those questions. A revised pilot project proposal (dated 12/2/2008) has subsequently been submitted to the TAC. A question remains on what the spatial extent of the analysis will be (need a definition of "river's edge"). The consensus of the TAC was to have the analysis fall encompass the inundation/100 yr floodplain boundaries as a minimum. Burt will clarify this issue with Ray Rasker. Greg Johnson will look into contracting options, either using a sole source justification or pass-through via BLM.

## **Miscellaneous**

### MRNRC Conference and BiOP Forum

The Missouri River Natural Resources Committee (MRNRC) Conference and BiOP Forum will be held at the Crowne Plaza in Billings on March 25-27, 2009. The conference theme, "Beyond the Bend", is generally to look at mitigation, recovery, and restoration of the Missouri River system. Abstracts are due January 20<sup>th</sup>. Greg Johnson will check with the conference organizers to see if they would be willing to have a Yellowstone River breakout session. If so, several on the TAC will be encouraged to submit abstracts to highlight the CES. Susan Gilbertz has submitted an abstract on the cultural inventory.

### WRDA 2007 Roundtable

Nicole reported that the WRDA 2007 Roundtable is set to go on December 5<sup>th</sup>. The main focus will be on the implementation strategy for Section 3110. Agendas for that meeting have been distributed. All TAC members were encouraged to attend.

### Montana Rail Link

Karin Boyd went over the revised version of the "YRCDC/MRL Bank Protection Feasibility Assessment". Upon the Council's review and approval, it will be sent to MRL for their review. A Memo of Understanding and Scope of Work will be drafted to implement the tasks outlined in the assessment.

### 310 Google Earth Web Application

Warren Kellogg is continuing to work with DTM to further refine the web application based upon feedback from several sources. Two training sessions will be scheduled for the upper and lower Yellowstone River for CD Administrators sometime this winter. There will also be two additional training sessions for CDs outside the Yellowstone Basin. Funding is provided by DNRC-CARDD and will be administered through Lewis & Clark CD.

### TAC Meeting Schedule

The next TAC meeting will be held February 18<sup>th</sup> in Billings. The meeting location will be arranged by Nicole. A teleconference will be an option for January if deemed necessary. The YRCDC is scheduled to meet on January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Suggested agenda items for the TAC February meeting:

- Hydrology/Hydraulic modeling status

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- Economic Pilot Study Proposal
- Geomorphology Scope of Work
- Cumulative Effects (3-4 hours)
- MRL Bank Stabilization proposal
- Riparian Scope of Work
- MRNRC Conference

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